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Rogers, Charles Donald. The portrait; An Investigation of Contrasting and Comparable Moods and Attitudes in a Variety of Sitters.

Directed by: Andrew Martin.

The purpose of this study was to increase my understanding of art as it specifically relates to the portrait tradition, and to utilize the fine instruction being given at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro toward that goal.

THE PORTRAIT: AN INVESTIGATION OF CONTRASTING
AND COMPARABLE MOODS AND ATTITUDES
IN A VARIETY OF SITTERS

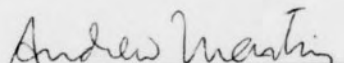
by

Charles Donald Rogers

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master Of Fine Arts

Greensboro
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Approved by


Thesis Advisor

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following Committee
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Date of Examination

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First of all I would like to express the utmost appreciation to my wife Arsonia for her support and encouragement while pursuing the Master of Fine Art Degree. I would also like to extend sincere appreciation to my thesis committee, Andrew Martin, Carl Goldstein, Joan Gregory and Gilbert Carpenter for their guidance and cooperation.

I want to dedicate this Thesis to the memory of a recently deceased brother, James Edward Rogers, who for most of his life recognized, encouraged and supported my involvement in art.

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CATALOGUE of EXHIBITION

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3. Seated Figure -acrylic- 36" x 24"
4. Standing Figure -acrylic- 30" x 24"
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7. Model Seated on Stool -acrylic- 30" x 24"

I shall attempt in this thesis to describe a very unique journey, a journey that in so many ways was as much a revelation to myself as the subjects that I was painting.

As the thesis title implies, these portraits are investigations of contrasting and comparable moods and attitudes in a variety of sitters.

Before attempting this thesis project I had casually assumed that if the artist put the nose, eyes, lips, ears, etc., in the correct proportions on the canvas, the resultant painting would be an excellent likeness. In part I was right -- I did get a likeness, but that was all -- merely a likeness. After some very rigorous critiques with members of my thesis committee, after re-thinking and re-examining my initial efforts in the portrait process, plus comparing beginning efforts with my most recent works, I do see a great difference, a most positive difference in dealing with (portraits) something so elusive, so complex as the human personality.

In the latest works that I've attempted, since January 1977 through April, I've become more concerned with moods, with the attitudes and sensibilities of the sitters, and how these things affect me, the artist, in my approach to painting them.

I suppose it was at this point that the most critical area in my paintings began to surface. Before beginning a portrait I would try to get some clue to the personality of the person I was to paint. I would ask probing questions, questions that often seemed peculiar to the sitter, i.e., what music do you like? do you have a hero? what is your political preference, and why? is any particular religion significant in your life? It was an amazing illuminating experience, an experience that I'd normally take as the usual way of getting to know a person, and of course, many of whom would soon be forgotten. The learning process, the great personality revelations begin to unfold as the artist is more conscious of his mission.

I began to notice the things people normally consider small, i.e., a certain smirk that may have been initiated by any number of questions, the wave of a finger, the nod of the head, the quality of a smile or laugh, was it from the gut or mere bearing of the teeth? What do the eyes say? And how do they say it? Some were strong and self-assured, others frightened and confused.

Now it seems, comes the real confrontation! Just who is the person you're painting? The sorting out process is never an easy one, and one that is often conflicting with the sitters' impressions of themselves.

My next step in this artistic journey of sorts, was to determine the design factors and color combinations to be used. Ironically, it

was here that I became consciously aware of my emotional responses were made evident with certain color, i.e., green and soft yellows were associated with youthfulness, violets and subtle yellows with aggressiveness.

I've always liked to work with my sitters in rooms with flat wall color and good window or natural light. Oftentimes I change the color (actual) of the walls, furniture, and even clothing worn by the sitter, probably as a result of my emotional state at a given time. Many things occur simultaneously as the portrait progresses. I get flashbacks of personality revelations like a kind of smile, a kind of eye contact, a kind of attitude that may have changed at the next painting session. For these reasons I often use certain colors that suggest emotion (warm colors - passion, cool colors - enigmatic personality).

The kinds of encounters described above were situations (varying in degree with each sitter) that I found to be a vital growth process for the artist probing, searching, investigating.